Foreign & Commonwealth Office (UK)

This week at the Foreign Office

2011-12-02

Speaking in the House of Commons on Wednesday,

Foreign Secretary William Hague described the attack on the British Embassy in Iran

on 29 November as “a breach of international responsibilities of which any nation should be ashamed.” The Foreign Secretary said that the attack, in which Embassy buildings were vandalised and looted by demonstrators, was a grave violation of the Vienna Convention which states that a host state is required to protect the premises of a diplomatic mission against any intrusion, damage or disturbance. The Foreign Secretary expressed his gratitude for the strong statements of concern and support from the United States, the European Union, Germany, Poland, Russia, China and many other nations.

The British Embassy in Tehran has now been closed. All Iranian diplomatic staff have been ordered to leave the United Kingdom.

The Foreign Secretary has also welcomed

the EU’s decision to intensify pressure on Iran

by extending sanctions to cover another 180 individuals and entities, including those directly associated with Iran’s nuclear programme.

Following his meeting with his European colleagues at the

Foreign Affairs Council in Brussels

on Thursday, Foreign Secretary William Hague welcomed new EU sanctions against the Syrian regime. This tenth round of sanctions aims to increase pressure on the Syrian regime to stop the continuing violent repression of the Syrian people. EU sanctions stand alongside measures introduced by Turkey including the freezing of assets belonging to Assad and individuals in the regime, and the Arab League’s decision to impose unprecedented sanctions. The Foreign Secretary welcomed these moves, which send a clear message that the Syrian regime’s actions have left it isolated.

The UN Human Rights Council in Geneva has held a

third Special Session on Syria on 2 December

in response to the latest independent UN report on the human rights situation. It has adopted a resolution which reiterates its unequivocal condemnation of the regime's human rights violations and establishes a human rights special rapporteur on Syria

Minister for the Middle East Alistair Burt said: "The UN Commission of Inquiry's report on Syria clearly shows that the Assad regime will stop at nothing, including killing and torturing young children, in their efforts to cling to power. These crimes cannot be allowed to continue. Syria is becoming increasingly isolated, and we will continue to do all we can to bring an immediate end to the violence."

On Wednesday

UK and Norway celebrated the centenary of Amundsen and Scott's expeditions to the South Pole

with an agreement to enhance polar co-operation. Foreign Secretary William Hague and Norwegian Foreign Minister, Jonas Gahr Støre, signed a High Level Arrangement which will launch a new £600,000 fund to provide for a series of collaborative scientific and cultural heritage projects over the next year.

Speaking at a

Human Rights Watch

reception on Tuesday Foreign Office Minister Alistair Burt said that "Our belief in democracy, our values of tolerance, fairness and justice all compel us to act when others are denied the rights that we enjoy."

Minister Alistair Burt welcomed women from Afghanistan

and representatives from leading UK charities to the Foreign Office on Monday to discuss women's rights in Afghanistan and the forthcoming international conference in Bonn.

Foreign Office Minister Jeremy Browne opened a new Consulate General in Recife, Brazil

on Monday. Recife was the home to one of the first ever British missions in South America in 1808. The move is part of a wider 'network shift' announced by the Foreign Secretary in May this year, where he signalled the FCO's intention to reinvigorate the diplomatic network to make it ready for the twenty-first century. The increased presence in Brazil is one of seven new Consulates General and up to six new Embassies opening in emerging markets.

The UK Climate Change Team in South Africa are blogging from the

UN Climate Summit in Durban (COP17)

. The 2011 UN Climate Summit is hosted by the Government of South Africa, from 28 November - 10 December and brings together representatives of the world’s governments, international organisations and civil society to agree international action on climate change. Secretary of State Chris Huhne will be representing the UK in the negotiations.

The Foreign Secretary has congratulated ASEAN countries on the signature of the

Protocol to the Southeast Asian Nuclear Weapon Free Zone Treaty

. Signatories to the Protocol agree to respect the status of the South East Asia Nuclear Weapon Free Zone, and agree not to use, or threaten to use, nuclear weapons against the 10 states party to the Zone Treaty.

The Foreign Office has warned

cross-country rallyists travelling through the Sahel region of North Africa

to be aware of the high risk of kidnaps and terrorist attacks.

Source: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/this-week-at-the-foreign-office--63